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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

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A radio talk by Laura Cowley Brossard, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 40 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, March 26, 1931.

Let me begin, by asking you the question that first set me thinking about my own kitchen: Did you ever consider how far you walk in preparing a meal and clearing up afterwards? Maybe not, because we get so accustomed to our own kitchen and the daily routine of the food work that we are not conscious of the distances we cover, and wonder why we are so tired at the end of the day. Most of us who have large kitchens can cut down the mileage tremendously by making a few changes in the arrangement of the equipment.

The best way to turn a questioning eye on your kitchen is to draw a plan of your floor and locate the stove, sink, and other pieces of stationary equipment on the plan. Then, with a pencil in your hand, put your mind to work on the preparation of an imaginary meal, following your progress around the kitchen by making penciled routes on the floor plan. Suppose you are preparing dinner. You may begin by getting the vegetables and taking them to the sink. If a paring knife is in a handy place at the sink, all well and good, but if not, you must take a trip with your pencil to the cabinet, and back again. Continue this game through the entire preparation of this imaginary meal, and then look at your paper plan.

You may find that you can save countless steps by rearranging the large pieces of furniture, placing them closer together and in a better relation to each other. The ideal arrangement always takes into consideration the order in which the work is to be done. For instance, in preparing meals we collect raw food, prepare it for cooking, cook it, and serve it. This gives us the key for placing equipment; first the refrigerator and food cupboard, then the kitchen cabinet, the stove, and last the serving table near the dining room door. In clearing away meals we scrape and stack the dishes, wash, drain, and put them away. Hence, first the stacking table, then the sink, then the drainboard, and last the shelves for dishes. The clearing away process should be routed to the left, for right-handed persons, so that in washing dishes they can be placed directly on the left-hand drainboard without crossing or shifting hands.

If you plan to rearrange your kitchen, you will find it helpful, I think, to make small models of your furniture from stiff paper, and place them on a paper floor plan. Of course, both must be made to scale, using perhaps one-fourth inch to the foot. These paper models of your big equipment can be placed in different positions on your floor plan until you find the best arrangement.

One of the very easiest things to do in making the kitchen convenient is to group the small equipment and supplies at the place where they are to be used. Near the sink, you will need brushes and knives for cleaning and preparing vegetables; also stew pans, double boilers, and other utensils that are to be filled with water before they are put on the stove. And of course here you will keep the articles needed for the dishwashing job.

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Store at the kitchen cabinet sugar, flour, and other dry groceries, bowls and spoons, and all other utensils used in mixing and getting food ready to cook or serve. On shelves built over the refrigerator may be located supplementary ice box supplies such as: canned foods, soft drinks, jellies and jams which can easily be put inside to chill.

Near the stove you will want to keep frying pans and utensils that are put on the stove to heat before food is placed in them; also pot lids, and forks and spoons used in the cooking and taking up of food, as well as salt and pepper, and flour for thickening.

You will find it convenient to have two sets of some of the small equipment which must be used at more than one work center, -- a paring knife at the sink for preparing vegetables, as well as one at the worktable; large spoons both at the stove and at the worktable.

But saving steps is not the only way to eliminate unnecessary fatigue in the kitchen. Provision should be made also for the good posture of the worker. You can accomplish this by having your cabinet, sink, and other work surfaces built high enough so that you can work comfortably without stooping. You will need also a stool or chair of a height that allows you to sit with ease at these work surfaces. The ideal work chair has a back support and a foot rest.

And now before I say Goodbye let me urge you to send for the Bureau of Home Economics bulletin on kitchens. Whether you plan to remodel, or want only some suggestions for rearranging your equipment, you will find this bulletin valuable. Write to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, or to your station, for Farmers' Bulletin 1513, "Convenient Kitchens."